

Attachment to Item #333

UNCLASSIFIED

2 January 1961

TEXT OF AKSEL LARSEN'S MEMORANDUM TO THE CENTRAL
COMMITTEE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF DENMARK,
AS PUBLISHED IN LAND OG FOLK, 28 August 1958

The exchange of opinions at the Central Committee meeting which took place from 31 May to 1 June 1958 revealed an extensive and profound lack of agreement in the party leadership (and hence probably also in the party) concerning the understanding of and the attitude toward the basic tenets of Marxism, concerning the interpretation of these and their application to concrete situations, and concerning the party's policies, its working methods, and its organizational structure.

However, this exchange of opinion disclosed nothing new and unknown. The lack of agreement and the conflicts are old and could have been no secret to anyone who has followed the course of events in recent years with open eyes. This all the more so since also on certain previous occasions -- generally because of events occurring abroad -- we have had discussions which disclosed conflicts of opinion of such a nature as to hinder the work of our movement.

On the other hand, there have been intervening periods during which agreement and tolerance apparently reigned in the party leadership. But no one should be in doubt, and no one can be in doubt, that this was because certain questions on which differences were irreconcilable were circumvented, or because an outward appearance of agreement was maintained by the Executive Committee's working out or formulating a compromise on the basis of which it put on a unified front as Central Committee meetings and on other occasions.

However, these divergences are so profound that we must face the fact that this method not only is not advantageous, but also harmful. It prevents any clarity as to which viewpoints on questions of principle, politics, and organization really exist. It prevents the necessary exchange of opinion, without which we cannot achieve any clarity as to where our party stands, the setting of goals, practical-political tasks, and establishment of working methods for their solution. It does no good and produces no results either to demonstrate agreement or fool oneself or others into thinking that there is agreement when, in reality, there are disagreements. If these are serious they must be set forth openly, and, through thinking and discussion, clarity and decision must be reached.

The method which has been used most during recent years in our party, namely, to circumvent or to keep divergent viewpoints, quiet, or to bridge them with the help of a compromise, has not fooled alert party workers. They have known or felt that despite the apparent agreement, something was wrong. The air in the party became bad. The political conflicts turned into, or became connected with, personal ones; the result was confusion in the ranks, reduced activity, tendencies to fractional activity, or, at best, that the most active elements concentrated on the practical concrete party work of the moment, not on broadly conceived political work.

We all know that things cannot go on as they have for a long time. Events have carried us to a point at which the differences of opinion and the conflicts cannot be kept quiet, and only by subjecting them to an open and thorough discussion which will get to the bottom of things can the party achieve the right policy develop its capabilities as a revolutionary political factor, and regain its faith in itself. Without claiming to have included everything or to have said anything exhaustive about all of our problems, and recognizing my duty and my responsibility, I shall here set forth my opinion as to where we stand, why we have come to this point, and what should be done.

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It Is We Who Must Do the Work in Denmark

For years, our party has been regressing organizationally, with regard to number of members, circulation of the press, publishing activity, and our political influence in the workers movement. Nothing is gained by closing our eyes to these facts or by seeking false comfort in the belief that our influence in the population stands in inverse proportion to our organizational strength and the number of votes we obtain in elections. Neither does it help to proclaim on appropriate occasions that progress has now begun and that great results await us.

Neither does it mean that we are without resources. Despite the regression, the party still has considerable strength. In certain decisive situations (for example that of spring 1956), we were even able, at the head of the Danish working class, to bring about, and, in part, lead, very extensive mass actions. But the strength of the party has had to be used to a continually greater degree, to defend the party's organizational positions and to assure the most essential financial support for the party and its press. Great sacrifices have been demanded of and made by our members in defense of the party's existence. But these did not change the situation and the development of the movement. The regression continued.

Our party is small. It faces the opposition of the superior forces of the Social Democratic Party. These are the hard facts, even though they conflict unpleasantly with the basic view of our party, namely, that we and not the Social Democrats are the party of the working class and that our program is the right one, as regards the goal of socialism, the fight for peace, and the day-to-day demands of the program, while the policies of the Social Democrats are wrong.

It is no comfort, but it provides food for thought, that the situation in Denmark today is the same as that which exists in a number of other countries: Sweden, Norway, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Switzerland, and Austria. Much indicates that the same reasons have caused and perpetuated in these countries this situation in the workers movement, reasons of both a subjective and an objective nature. But it is our most urgent and necessary task to find the reasons in Denmark as a prerequisite to bringing about a change.

At congress after congress and at Central Committee meeting after Central Committee meeting, we have been very good at emphasizing the danger of underestimating the will to fight and the fighting power of the working class and of our own strength and capability, so good that it has led to a more or less pronounced inclination to close our eyes to our actual weakness and to our continued (although uneven) retrogression. When we could no longer keep our eyes closed, many put the blame in part on objective circumstances (the strength of our opponents, the anti-Communist campaigns, etc.) and, in part, ignored our own situation and sought comfort and optimism in the progress and strength of Communism on a world scale and in the growth, both geographically and on the basis of population, of the socialist-governed world. But this is a flight from Danish reality. The stronger socialism becomes on a world scale, the better for us, too, of course; but as it is true as Marx said that the liberation of the workers must be their own work, so it in Denmark that the Danish working class has to fight against capitalism and for socialism; we must not hope only or rely on others to do the work for us.

Developments of the Past Few Years

Our party is a part of the Danish workers movement. Its birth and growth was accomplished by a splitting off from the Social Democratic Party. The condition for its birth as an independent political party was present in the more or less

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clear revolutionary opposition to the reformism which had been victorious in the Social Democratic Party, and in opposition to that party's policy of truce (with the bourgeois parties) during and just after World War I. But the impetus for its formation came from the outside, from the great socialist revolution in Russia, from the revolutionary events and the development of the Communist parties in other countries. The party is thus also historically, to a great degree, an international party. The growth and decline of its influence has been connected to a large degree with the development of the international movement. But the periods in which there was significant progress were inextricably bound up with the party's positive efforts in the struggle of the working masses here at home, and when there was retrogression, this took place for the most part at times when the party was not able to live up to the tasks which developments here at home set for it.

The party has had to fight a hard battle since the retrogression began. Its opponents, including the Social Democrats, who received the support of the middle class, were superior and were able, on the whole, to force the party into a defensive position which, despite some periods of progress, it has not been able to hold. This came to characterize the party, which tried to entrench itself, but thereby (against its own intent) contributed to its own isolation. The effort and the struggle just to maintain the party itself came to play an increasingly larger part in the work and the struggle to gain leadership over the masses of the working people. The party had and has a faithful core of members and supporters who will not give up the party and who have sacrificed and will sacrifice enormously to save it, but the party has not been able to push forward. The only campaigns in which we were able to always (or always almost) to exceed the goal which had been set were the fund collection campaigns. But if the purpose of the campaign was to increase the membership, the goal was, as a rule, not achieved (aside from the fact that the progress made during a campaign did not offset the gradual retrogression which, with near certainty, followed in the months after the drive).

Gradually the party has come to use an increasingly larger amount of its strength just to maintain itself, to assure the necessary financial support for Land og Folk (the party daily organ) and for the party's organizational existence, to make collections, to collect dues and guarantee funds, to collect from subscribers, etc. The leading comrades in the party organizations slog away at this, but there is not time or energy enough for the political-ideological work in the party organizations and outwardly. No wonder that these conditions alone make many comrades tired or make many buy themselves free of their duties as Communists by contributions of money. We do win new members and readers (although not nearly enough), but we lose still more, and even though many keep the faith, it is hard to remain optimistic and keep up one's spirit when appreciable results fail to materialize.

Our Party and the Soviet Union

There has probably never existed in Denmark a party as interested in and as intimately connected with the international movement and struggle for socialism as ours. To the Danish Communists, the Soviet Union was the great, decisive socialist conquest in which socialism, for the first time in the history of mankind, was transformed from theory into action. The progress of the Soviet Union, the victories for the building of socialism were always our victories; they strengthened the whole international movement and brought world socialism closer. The Communist Party of the Soviet Union was always our model and our ideal. What it did, what its leaders said, was right and guided the views and policies of the Danish Communists.

It was the Soviet Union which bore the heaviest burden during the war against Hitler's Germany and which, more than any other power in the anti-Hitler

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coalition, contributed to the victory in that great war of liberation. After the defeat of Germany, the Soviet Union's victory helped the working people in a number of other countries take political power, to liquidate capitalism, and to begin the building of socialism. It was and is obvious that the Soviet Union is the largest and leading socialist power in the world and that without the existence of the Soviet Union and without its development from an underdeveloped half-feudal country (for that was the heritage which the Russian people received from Tsarism and capitalism) to a modern industrial society with colossal material and political strength, socialism cannot maintain itself and develop victoriously in the People's Democracies of Europe.

This evaluation and this basic view of the Soviet Union resulted however in our uncritically and without closer investigation or independent consideration approving everything which the Communist Party of the Soviet Union undertook and even made us unable to recognize the possibility that mistakes could be made, let alone serious mistakes. And when anything happened which made us doubt, we rejected that doubt, just as in our agitation for the socialistic Soviet Union, we painted a glorified picture instead of seeing and admitting that the building of socialism occurs with difficulties and conflicts, progress and retrogression. In the party, we built our ideological training on works and theories worked out first and foremost by Stalin, without really looking into whether these were in complete agreement with the theories of Marxism-Leninism and a further development of these.

In connection with its 20th Congress, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union revealed a long series of shortcomings, mistakes, infringements of justice, and crimes which, contrary to the idea of socialism, had taken place or been committed in the Soviet Union. It was a serious and bitter lesson to us that the existence of socialist state power does not automatically assure against mistakes and errors and that we, in our relations with our brother parties and in our evaluation of the socialist countries, have the responsibility not to approve, to say nothing of praising everything in blind confidence, but critically and independently to orient ourselves and take a position with regard to the problems. This does not mean disapproval or condemnation of the Soviet Union, the socialist foundation of which was not shaken by the mistakes admitted.

Did We Understand the Lessons of the 20th Congress?

An understanding of the significance of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has not yet sufficiently penetrated the consciousness of our party. The old uncritical tradition lives on in that our party still is most inclined, almost as a reflex action, to approve and adopt as its viewpoint everything which is said or done by the Soviet Union or other socialist countries or their parties; we have forgotten the lesson of the 20th Congress.

Numerous examples of this can be cited, but for the time being, I shall limit myself to two which are very characteristic:

In the midst of the tremendous movement on the part of the public, on a worldwide scale, which Albert Schweitzer's first appeal against the atom bomb had brought about, the question was raised at an activist meeting for Greater Copenhagen at the end of May 1957 as to whether our party, partially directly, partially through Land og Folk, ought not urge the Soviet Union to cease its tests of atom and hydrogen bombs and to urge the two other large powers to do the same. During the discussion, statements were made pro and contra. In my final remarks I unconditionally supported the idea with the explanatory statement that the tests constitute so great a danger to humanity that when no agreement can be reached because of Great Britain's and the US' refusal, the Soviet Union should lead the way alone, since this would effect world opinion to bring greater pressure to bear

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on Great Britain and the US. The same evening, I wrote an article which I gave to Land og Folk the next day for publication.

A number of Central Committee members were shocked to think that I had taken this position. Several Copenhagen District leaderships passed protest resolutions against the party chairman. The Executive Committee decided that my article must not be printed and that I must never again express myself as at the activist meeting, either publicly or in party gatherings. I was allowed, however, to present my proposal during the negotiations which our party delegation had with representatives of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in Moscow in August. I did this, and the idea was decisively rejected by the Soviet comrades, who referred, among other things, to the following statement by Khrushchev, made to a Japanese journalist in June 1957 (printed in Tiden, No 5, 1957):

"Concerning your proposal that the Soviet Union should cease the tests on a unilateral basis, this can be said:

"Imagine the following: The Soviet Union declares it will stop tests of atomic weapons unilaterally, but the other countries who are also in possession of such weapons do not react to the step we take but continue the experiments. The Soviet Union would naturally get behind while the other side would, in the meanwhile, attempt to get farther ahead.

"Without having achieved anything, we would, at a later time, be forced to begin the experiments again. What would the result be? The armaments race would be continued with increased effort and to a still larger degree.

"A unilateral statement from the Soviet Union would not give a positive result; quite the contrary, it would be encouragement to the aggressors."

Most of the members of the Executive Committee were of the opinion that if the Communist Party of the Soviet Union looked at it in that way, we could not hold a different opinion. I was of the opinion that it depended on the time and the circumstances (the so-called psychological moment) as to whether the proposal should be put to the Soviet Union again later, and I so stated at the Copenhagen conference in December 1957. As far as I know, the majority of the Copenhagen leadership was scandalized that I could hold such an opinion.

But in spring 1958, the Soviet government proclaimed that it, unilaterally, was going to cease atomic testing immediately. It requested that Great Britain and the US do likewise, and added that if they did not follow its example, the Soviet Union would later have to consider taking up the testing again; that is to say, precisely what I had been spokesman for in summer 1957 and precisely the opposite of what Khrushchev had said in June 1957 and which Kuusinen had repeated to us in August. But how did the party leadership and Land og Folk react to the changed policy of the Soviet Union?

In this way: they cheered the Soviet Union and declared that it had done the only right and defensible thing. In other words, when the Soviet Union said no, that was right; when it later said yes, then that was also the only right thing! I do not know what our members in Copenhagen who knew about the discussion at the activist meeting in May 1957 thought, but if they did not feel queer at the about-face of the party leadership, then I consider it most deplorable.

I shall mention another example: When Imre Nagy and others had left the Yugoslav Embassy in Budapest in November 1956 and were arrested and presumably sent to Rumania in violation of the promise of safe conduct which had been granted, Land og Folk reported this, but at the same time, on the front page on 25 November, it carried a prominently placed article entitled, "It Must Be Told!"

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in which it was declared that the explanations given by the Hungarians were insufficient and that the public must have a clear and detailed explanation concerning all of the circumstances connected with the case. Two days later, Land og Folk reprinted an article from the Norwegian paper Friheten, which said the same thing and asserted that there was insufficient assurance that the promise of safe conduct had been kept. Later, we have reported, from time to time, from Hungarian sources that no trial of Nagy was being prepared, nor ever would be.

When the report came in June of this year that Nagy and others, after a secret trial, had been condemned to death and executed, Land og Folk gave, practically speaking, outright approval to it without, in any way, calling attention to its viewpoint of November 1956.

Our Traditions and the Suspicion Thrown on Us

We know that our opponents' most important propaganda weapon against us is the assertion that we are not an independent Danish Party but that the Danish Communists get their orders from Moscow, that we unconditionally approve everything that is said and done by the Soviet Union, that we are prepared to change opinion every time the Soviet Union does, and that as a result we do not serve the interests of Denmark, but rather those of the Soviet Union. It is of little use that in no uncertain terms we avow that we are an independent Danish party. Yes, even the most correct political contributions from us in Danish domestic and foreign policy, in questions of social legislation or trade union issues, do not assure us the trust of the Danish people as long as many, probably even most, think and say: "Yes, but just the same, we dare not trust the Communists, for they get their thoughts, ideas, and policies from Moscow."

But we ourselves are partially to blame for this. Our own actions, which I have just pointed up by these examples, make it easier for our opponents to throw suspicion on us. We must, without offending to the slightest degree the laws of international solidarity, without stabbing the Soviet Union in the back, free ourselves from the tradition of approving, mechanically and automatically, of everything which comes from the socialist countries. I cannot refrain from repeating what I said in a report on the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which I made at the Central Committee meeting on 21 April 1956:

"As an integral part of the international Communist movement, we have the right and the responsibility to learn from what has happened and not, in sincere and well-founded enthusiasm but uncritical trust, to approve of everything which happens in the Soviet Union and the other socialist states or in the Communist parties and workers parties in other countries. We have the responsibility to acquire for ourselves the best possible information (and we trust that our brother parties will help us in this). We have the responsibility of judging things independently, and if this tells us that perhaps in important issues something has been done which is not in accord with Marxism-Leninism, it is our duty to reveal it, in one way or another. This is part of the solidarity of the international movement.

"Naturally this is not to say that we should try as much as possible to intervene in the affairs of our brother parties. In most instances and in many situations, such affairs are strictly their own business. But in important questions in questions of significance for the international workers movement and therefore also for us in Denmark, we have the responsibility and the right to follow events as closely as possible, to form our own opinion, and to express it if we feel it necessary. So decisive an influence do policies of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and developments in the Soviet Union have on the fighting movement for socialism, for progress, and for peace in the whole world that certainly in this connection, we have this responsibility and right."

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I know that today there are comrades who interpret this as the most arrant revisionism and who assert that there are a few of us who think that we can only prove our party's independence by taking, as far as possible, a different attitude or asserting opinions differing from those of our Soviet comrades. This accusation is groundless, but since it has been made (at the Central Committee meeting in February 1958), there is probably reason to say: I have the impression that many comrades think that our solidarity with the Soviet Union demands of us that we never have a divergent opinion.

Our Congress Declaration

Finally, it is probably in order to refer to the decision concerning the working basis for the party which was approved at our 19th Congress in January 1957 and which should be binding. In this, it was stated:

"Standing on our party's fundamental ideology, we will independently judge and take a position with regard to developments and events in other countries, as well as the developments in the workers movement in other countries. We consider the international exchange of opinions on the vital problems of the workers movement and socialism to be advantageous and indispensable to the further development of the theory of scientific socialism and to stimulation of the work of the movement in the various countries."

This statement was seriously meant and should be lived up to. However, very little has been done to popularize it in the party, and in practice, it seems to have been forgotten to a great extent. In the present situation, and on the basis of the discussion here at home and internationally concerning the problems which arose in connection with the Yugoslav congress, may I remind you of the declaration of the Danish congress and affirm its validity. Out of regard of those who love quotations, it is perhaps not out of place, in the same connection, to call to mind Khrushchev's reply to the editor of the New York Times, Catledge, when Catledge asked him in an interview: "Do you consider the Communist Party of the Soviet Union to be the highest authority in the matter of interpretation of the theories of Marxism-Leninism?"

"You have stated this question in a way that we Communists never do -- posing the problem in that way is incorrect. No person and no party can demand the sole right to interpretation of the teachings of Marxism-Leninism. Marxism-Leninism is a science in a stage of development, and every Communist Party can make its contribution to the development of this science. Both the largest and the smallest country have the same potentiality. The question of interpretation of Marxism-Leninism is a question of quality and not of quantity."

The Yugoslav Program

A few remarks should be made here about the Congress of the Communist League of Yugoslavia and the discussion which is being carried on or was carried on about the draft program.

When our Party received the invitation to the congress, there was immediate agreement, without discussion in our Executive Committee, that we ought to send a delegation, and at a later meeting, the two members of the delegation were appointed (Aksel Larsen and Knud Jespersen). During the last couple of weeks before the delegation left we received a number of communications from the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union sharply critical of the Yugoslav draft program and informing us that the Soviet party had reversed its previous decision to send a delegation (Suslov and Pospelov) and that it would not even send a greeting to the congress. We were also informed that a number of parties had followed the example of the Soviet party and had also withdrawn their delegations. In giving the reasons for this action, it was said that if

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a delegation member made a speech of greeting, this would be taken as support for the incorrect viewpoints of the program, and if anyone in his speech of greeting criticized the program draft, the result would be an unnecessarily sharp discussion at the congress and unfavorable publicity. At the same time, an extremely critical article was published in the Soviet Kommunist. After having become aware of this, the majority in the Executive Committee held to the decision to send the delegation (with the change that Boerge Houmann was to be sent the delegation (with the change that Boerge Houmann was to be sent instead of Aksel Larsen), while a minority of three voted against it.

Concerning the draft program and the international discussion about it, I would like to refer you to the speech I made at the Central Committee meeting. To be on the safe side, However, I will say this:

The draft program (I still do not know the program as it was finally approved) contains correct and incorrect viewpoints, analyses, and theories, and it is well-formulated in some places and poorly-formulated in other places.

Its analysis of the international situation, with its contradictions, is not Marxist because it is in part based on the concept of the world being divided into two "antagonistic military-political blocs" and in part because it presents this division as though it were the reason for the clashes between the two economic systems, socialism and capitalism.

Its analysis or presentation of the capitalist state and society is incompatible with the Marxist concept. Although it contains this on the whole incorrect part, the draft program, nevertheless, presents several correct and useful ideas which may serve further to enrich and develop the Marxist concept of society.

In connection with the formulations concerning the capitalist states or in consequences thereof, many of the formulations can only be taken as agreeing with the social democratic theory of a peaceful transition (or growth) of capitalism into socialism. Moreover, formulations pertaining to a revolutionary, peaceful road to socialism and a revolutionary or a peaceful road (which latter is always incorrect: a revolution is a revolution, whether it is carried out by peaceful or by violent means) are alternately employed.

The draft program, in certain places, appears to place in the same category or to equate the purposes and efforts of the imperialistic powers and the purposes and efforts of the Soviet Union. It does not assert sufficiently forcefully and clearly (but nevertheless does assert!) that it is the imperialists who are aiming at war and world hegemony.

The composition of the draft program is somewhat disorderly. Many formulations are unclear, and much is said correctly in one place and incorrectly in another. (To what extent this is due to the double translation, Serbian-English-Danish, is not known.)

What the draft program says about the socialistic state power (dictatorship of the proletariat) and about its withering away, which will be a long process, perhaps, is in the main correct. The withering away of the state is not presented (as asserted by many critics) as a current main task. This section contains many correct thoughts on democracy in the socialist state, some of them here formulated for the first time.

The draft correctly points out the ever-present danger of the degeneration of the socialist state and the necessity of being unceasingly on guard against this, correctly points to the bureaucracy which has appeared and the danger of its growing, the danger of inequality between socialist states, and tendencies toward, or striving for, hegemony, etc.

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The formulations pertaining to proletarian internationalism and to the correct relationships and connections among socialist states and among Marxist parties are, for the most part, correct.

It is correctly said that dogmatism has dominated the international Communist movement for a long time, that Marxist thinking has not kept up with developments in society, and that a dangerous pragmatic revision of Marxism-Leninism has taken place, especially in the Soviet Union during the Stalin period. The character and danger of rightist-opportunist revisionism in the workers movement is correctly pointed out.

The draft program contains correct and significant, as well as positive and constructively critical, thoughts regarding the Communist parties in the capitalist countries -- weaknesses, sectarianism, and their propensity toward permitting their theories and policies to be determined from without.

It is understandable that the Yugoslavs, after their experiences during the 1948-1953 period, harbor misgivings about being tied to the socialist camp, in the narrow sense of this term. It is unjustified to construe this as meaning that the Communist League of Yugoslavia refuses to be a part of the socialist camp in the broader sense of the term, or dissociates itself from international cooperation or from fraternal collaboration among the socialist countries.

The Current Discussion

The international discussion which has taken place thus far on the Yugoslav draft program and Yugoslav viewpoints has, as far as criticism of the Communist League of Yugoslavia is concerned, been unnecessarily sharp and in many cases demagogic and not convincing in a comradely way. This discussion, and its many accompanying acts, are, to a regrettable degree, reminiscent of the 1948-1953 period.

It would have been desirable if, as basis for critical discussion, the full text (the essential chapters, at any rate) of the Yugoslav draft program had been published in the other socialist countries instead of the short, obtuse, and misinterpreted quotations from it which appeared in the critical articles.

In reply to the assertion that the Cominform resolution of 1948 has never been withdrawn and must still, in all its essentials, be considered politically correct, it should be said that the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, in its resolution of 30 June 1956, explicitly pointed out the grave errors committed by Stalin, among them the "flagrant arbitrariness which led to the conflict with Yugoslavia in the postwar years." It should also be remembered that Comrade Khrushchev, in the Central Committee's report to the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union characterized Yugoslavia in the following terms:

"In the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, where the power belongs to the workers and society is based on the joint ownership of the means of production, there are being developed, in the process of the building of socialism, concrete forms peculiar to Yugoslavia for the state's economic administration."

Assuming the correctness of this characteristic (and nothing has been advanced to indicate that it is incorrect), Yugoslavia is a socialist state with an economic and social socialistic basis. This does not rule out the Communist League of Yugoslavia's making mistakes or forming theories which are more or less incompatible with Marxism-Leninism, but the purpose of an international discussion must be not to condemn, but to point out such mistakes in an objective and comradely manner and thereby to help correct them. Meanwhile it has unfortunately quickly become good form internationally not to make a speech,

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write an article, or pass a resolution without including a large or small section, which, without argument, condemns "Yugoslav revisionism."

The Declaration by the 12 Parties

Here, it becomes necessary to say a few words about the Declaration issued by the Conference of the Parties of the 12 Socialist Countries, in Moscow in November 1957.

When the delegation from our party was made acquainted in November 1957 with the first draft of the declaration, we did not know the actual background for it, nor its purpose. At that time, we made some comments on this draft, among other things concerning the section on dogmatism, but no attention was apparently paid to these comments. We noted, however, that the declaration stated expressly that each individual party must decide for itself which danger (dogmatism or rightist opportunist revisionism) it regards as the most serious in a given situation.

The declaration was approved in principle as the basis for our party's activity by decision of the Central Committee meeting in February 1958. However, it can most probably be assumed that not all of the Central Committee members had read the declaration at that time and that only a very few had studied it. At any rate, it was not discussed at the Central Committee meeting in question, nor has it been discussed since with a view to understanding it and its concrete application to Danish conditions and the needs of our party. It is therefore unfounded, unreasonable, and indefensible, it is dogmatic and schematic, to wish to solve important problems and to take a position with regard to them by simply saying that "we stand on the basis of the declaration." I am reminded of what I said at the Central Committee meeting on 1 February 1958 in my report on the Moscow conference and my explanation of the contents of the declaration:

"Perhaps it should be added, although it should be unnecessary, that neither this section of the declaration (about dogmatism and revisionism), nor the declaration as a whole, should be looked on as a catechism. You cannot, by simply reading the declaration, find the answers to all the problems which arise for a Communist Party or for a Communist. The declaration furnished the basis, but it is our task, on the basis of the concepts established in the declaration, to establish our policies and to formulate them on the basis of Danish conditions in any situation which may arise to set tasks before us."

The acrimonious international debate on the viewpoints, and draft program of the Communist League of Yugoslavia undeniably gives the impression that the declaration was formed with a view to, or in consideration of, the ideological differences between the Yugoslav party and other parties. However, nothing was told us about this during the negotiations and conference in Moscow in November 1957. Neither was the seriousness of the differences in any way hinted at to the delegation of our party, which, in August 1957, discussed several questions with a delegation from the Central Committee of the communist party of the Soviet Union, not even when we asked why they were beginning at that time to speak and write so strongly against revisionism and what their definite purpose was in so doing.

Revisionism and Dogmatism

Rightist-opportunistic revisionism is the chief danger to Marxism, the chief danger to the workers movement, and the declaration's definition of this revisionism is correct. But this does not mean, nor does it prove, that this rightist-opportunistic revisionism is and always has been the chief danger to the Communist parties and to the socialist countries.

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The international Communist movement has, for many years, as was shown by the self-criticism and the documents from the 20th Congress of the Soviet party and later documents and disclosures, been dominated by dogmatism bound up with pragmatic revisionism of the theories of Marxism-Leninism. Dogmatism and the concomitant sectarianism are still very strong and ingrained; they are a hindrance to the liberation of Marxist thinking, to the further development of its theories, and to the application of dialectic methods.

Thus they also hamper the party in formulating and undertaking a revolutionary policy for the masses. On these points the draft program of the Yugoslav party is in unusually good accord with what was said in the speeches at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (this refers particularly to considerable portions of Comrade Mikoyan's speech), as well as with what was said as recently as in Pravda's article of 3 July 1957:

"In this country there still exist people who, on internal and external issues, act as dogmatists or sectarians, with a fossilized approach to Leninism.

"These people have no contact with the people, they do not understand the situation, they manifest conservatism and stick firmly to obsolete forms and methods of work. They do not understand the new things which arise in life. They wish to turn the party back to the incorrect methods of leadership which were condemned by the 20th Congress. If our vigilance weakens and we do not fight the spread of such views, it can have serious results for the party and its unity." (Pravda's article on the occasion of the expulsion of Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich, and Shepilov.)

It is a fundamental principle of all scientific thinking and work that one must never take anything for granted, but subject the validity of every theory or concept to doubt and investigation in every specific situation. This fundamental principle applies with special force in the science of society and in politics. We trespass against it to a high degree.

Marxism is not a dogma or a collection of dogmas, but rather a guide to action. It did not come from the hands of Marx and Engels completely formed and in all its details eternally valid, nor has it arrived at its final form through the development and enrichment which later Marxist theoreticians have given it, especially Lenin. New features and elements are constantly arising or being disclosed in the development of society, which can only be explained by a further development, and a bringing up to date of the theories of Marxism-Leninism. But at the time when, during the Stalin period, momentous pragmatic revisions were often made of Marxism-Leninism, Stalin's theories were made into or considered as dogma, the correctness or currency of which was never investigated or made the subject of deliberation. To the contrary, an attempt was made to fit the picture of reality to these dogmas which were created or existed not only in the field of theory, but also in the fields of politics, the organizational life of the party, methods of work, and methods of leadership. The roots of this dogmatism (schematism, sectarianism, conservatism) go very deep in the movement and are widely distributed. We are guilty of a very grave error if we think or assert that this dogmatism was eradicated once and for all with the 20th Congress.

As shown previously, there still exists in our party a strong inclination, despite the information which the 20th Congress gave us and despite the resolution concerning the working basis for the party adopted at our own 19th (extraordinary) Congress, to assume automatically, without or with far too little, independent evaluation or making up of one's own mind that everything which comes from the socialist countries or from our brother parties is right and valid for us as well. But simply because it is declared somewhere else that now it is not dogmatism, but rather revisionism, which is the great, acute danger, it is not proved that this also true in our situation and that we ourselves are thereby excused from thinking and looking into the issue.

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UNCLASSIFIED

(More)

The fact that some, even many, parties, one after another, assert the same thing constitutes no proof, nor does reference to the fact that a certain elaboration of the Marxist theory or a certain theoretical-political line has been supported or adopted by one, several, or many parties constitute proof. The correctness of a theory cannot be proved by voting or by repetition of dogma, but only by being tested in practice, and in practice, it has given the expected results.

It is perhaps in order here to recall what Friedrich Engels wrote in his letter of 31 July 1877 to Wilhelm Liebknecht, namely, that a decision made by a congress can endow nothing with the attributes of science and that "there exists no democratic forum for scientific works, and I have had enough experience (in that regard)."

On the Military Question

It is my opinion that dogmatism and thinking in grooves have done great harm to our party and that it continues to be very strong in the party and is the chief hindrance to fruitful political work in getting the party out of its isolation. This is why it has been easy, and is still so easy, for our opponents, irrespective of our correct policies in many fields, to stamp us as a remotely controlled party, a party which is not Danish, thinking, agitating, and acting independently. It is the reason why in our politics on important issues, we emphasize, schematically and monotonously, the same old slogans which were perhaps right at one time but which have not kept pace with developments, do not show the people the way, and cannot unify and arouse the working class to a successful struggle.

As illustrative of this I shall mention a concrete issue which I consider extremely important.

During the first years after the close of the war, on the basis of our experience and the possibilities we thought existed, we went in for a Danish but democratic defense preparedness. When Denmark became a member of the Atlantic Pact we changed our attitude to a degree -- but only to a degree. We voted against military appropriations and against the budget, partly because it contained military appropriations, partly to emphasize that we were opposed to the main line of the government's foreign policy. But we did not oppose defense preparedness as such nor military appropriations as such. We demanded that military expenditures be cut, and in manifestos and bills at the Folketing we demanded their reduction by 500 million.

No one should wonder that this proposal, repeated year after year, has not caused any great stir. One had to ask involuntarily: So, the Communists want military defense after all, only it must not cost so much. Cannot a more effective defense be had for a billion than for 500 million kroner? Or the other way around: Will a military defense which may cost at the most 500 million be of any use? If not, what would be its purpose?

I am convinced that because of Denmark's geographic location and small size, any kind of military defense of the country in this age of modern weapons would be a complete impossibility. The existence of a military establishment in Denmark can only increase the danger to the country and its population, in the event a great war should break out. This would lead only to our total destruction. Therefore, the right policy would be to go in for, not economy nor reduced armaments, but complete disarmament of Denmark. There is sense in such a policy. It would be understood by large portions of the population. It is consistent. And at the same time, it has the supplementary tactical advantage that most people would be attracted by the thought of saving the unproductive military expenditures completely and of using these funds instead for social progress, for investment in production and employment, for improving the country's balance of foreign currency, etc.

My proposal is nothing new to the Executive Committee, but it has until now been rejected by the majority in the Executive Committee, and in such a way, moreover, that I have not been able to put it up for discussion in the party press or at Central Committee meetings, because it was their (the members of the Executive Committee) opinion that a change of this kind in our policy could only be decided on by a congress. I can only look on this rejection as a product of - thinking in grooves, of dogmatism, but I think that the time has come when a proposal of a policy of this kind should be debated in the broadest manner by the whole party.

On Democratic Socialism

The party's organization, working methods, and leadership methods must be examined thoroughly to understand this dogmatism, thinking in grooves, pigheadedness, and bureaucracy.

Without a Marxist party, the working class cannot carry on effectively its struggle for socialism and its struggle for the day-to-day demands in such a way that it does not hinder, but furthers, the long-range socialist struggle. The most class-conscious part of the working class, the part most willing to struggle, and its allies must be organized as a party.

But in every organization, in the organizational form itself, lies the danger of conservatism, pigheadedness, and dogmatism. Considerations for the organization and its growth as an organization come to weigh heavily on the consciousness of the members and of the leadership, aside from considerations for the goal of the organization. This danger exists in every party, even the most consistently revolutionary party, and if one does not recognize and constantly fight it, the party loses part of its effectiveness. But centralism must be democratic and if one is not on guard, continually on guard, party democracy will suffer. The party belongs to its members -- this must constantly be kept in mind. And the party is not a goal in itself, it is a tool for the struggle of the working class.

The party must be united, yes! But it must not be united for the sake of unity; it must be a conscious political fighting unit but also a living, democratic, political organism which is not directed and led by political or organizational dogma. Every attempt to lead the party by command and to maintain unity for the sake of unity, the party for the sake of the party, divests the party of its political striking power, hinders its possibilities for growth, or does even worse than -- that. Only failure can result if, under the slogan, "the party must not be a discussion club," exchange of opinion in the party on theoretical, political, or organizational matters is hindered or prevented. The result will be congealment of the party's political activity, passivity, or work mechanically done in the party organizations and by the party members, and stagnation. It can also happen that members who feel they have been gagged either leave the party or attempt to work for their views in a factional manner, and no matter how much one condemns this, one should understand the reasons behind such actions.

The maintenance of sound political life, activity, and democracy in the party is not the responsibility of the leadership alone. It is also the responsibility of the members. But the leadership does have the chief responsibility for members feeling that it is they who own the party and for their not ceasing to think for themselves and simply waiting for and falling in line with directions from above. A leadership has a great responsibility for and colossal influence on the thoughts and opinions of the members and must be careful that the use of this influence does not become abuse. Just as the leadership may be inclined, out of respect, in itself healthy, for larger and more experienced parties, automatically to regard the theories and resolutions of these parties as dogmas and schematically to put them into use at home, so the members, the longer they have been in the party and gotten accustomed to its internal working methods, will tend to make the ideas taught by the leadership their own, without examining their validity.

The party must be united and its leadership collective. But collectivity must not be made into a fetish in worship of which a unanimous collective decision must always be reached either by a compromise, which does not make for clarity, or by circumventing issues on which there are divergent viewpoints or by letting the majority of the collective leadership decide that the opinion of the minority must not see the light of day before a larger forum and not be debated at all by the whole party. Stated still more concretely: Acute situations may arise in which it is necessary for the Executive Committee, despite divergent opinions, to act as a unit. But it must not be the rule that the Executive Committee, despite divergent opinions on issues of consequence, act as a unit toward the Central Committee or the Central Committee, toward the party members. The Executive Committee has no right to do this, and it will not profit, but rather harm, the party. In the final analysis, while the party is a militant fighting organism, it is not a military organization.

During the past 2 months, we have discussed the problems concerning the Communist League of Yugoslavia. Opinions are sharply divided in the Executive Committee, as well as in the Central Committee. But the central party apparatus for which the Executive Committee is responsible, is unquestionably working in such a way that most of the members, under the influence of the party press have taken a position, because this influence, on the whole, one-sidedly follows the line of the sharp international criticism of the Communist League of Yugoslavia. Already at the Central Committee meeting on 31 May (the position taken by) Land og Folk was discussed. After this meeting, issue No. 4 of Tiden was published.

It contains a leading article which certainly does not reflect the differences of opinion in the Central Committee but makes it appear (to my way of thinking absolutely incorrectly) as though the discussion concerning the Yugoslav problem was over in the Central Committee, and that it had made a resolution binding on the whole party. This is misuse of Tiden to influence the members of the party. And it did not improve matters but, on the contrary, made them worse when the periodical then printed an interview with one of our delegates to the congress in Ljubljana and let him make a statement completely in line with the leading article. The correct thing to do would have been to interview the leader of the delegation, Boerge Houmann or still more correctly, to print the text of the report which Boerge Houmann presented at the Central Committee meeting. But the, the obvious purpose, the one-sided influenceing of the party members, would not, of course, have been achieved.

Concerning Our Statutes and Election Methods

A few words concerning the party's organizational structure: We have before us for evaluation a draft of the new party statutes. As a member of the commission, I myself have helped work them out. But the experience of the past year and a half and my own reflections make me seriously doubt the extent to which our statutes should be worked out in this way. Why have the draft statutes become what they are? Because the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has adopted statutes with, on the whole, the same content and structure, as have other parties. But this does not mean nor does it prove that our party, which must work under Danish conditions, should have the rigid and detailed statutes. I do not think that these specified rules as to what the party members may or may not do, or must do, are necessary, applicable to, or good for our party. In addition, we know that such strict rules cannot be lived up to and will not be lived up to -- in almost all cases, it will be a question of expediency or power of enforcement whether the rules can be applied -- so why put them on paper?

Now it is clear that democracy and the right of decision on the part of the members of the party cannot be assured by any kind of statutes and rules. But the statutes should, in any case, be so worded that they help the party's centralism to become as democratic as possible. Without making specific proposals here, I wish to say that I think that it must be stated in the statutes, and also otherwise assured, that the leading organs are duty-bound regularly and continually to make

reports to the members and that the leaderships be democratically elected. The latter applies not least to the election of district leaderships, of congress delegates, and of the party leadership. It should be established that such elections shall always take place by written and secret ballot and not by en bloc balloting. The practice must not be tolerated in elections (as still happens in some places) of voting for a bloc of candidates, with the sham concession to the rules of democracy that others may be voted for than those proposed by a committee -- on the condition that the person nominating a candidate who is not on the nominating committee's list must name the candidate whose name is to be crossed off the list. Let us get away from its being said concerning our election methods that "the leadership elects its own members!" Let us have confidence that the person or persons whom the members or the delegates want elected can also furnish leadership.

A NEW Look is Needed!

As was pointed out in the introduction, this is not an attempt to say everything that ought to be said or to treat exhaustively the problems with which our party struggles. This is a statement of my opinions in addition to what I have had occasion to say at Central Committee meetings, and a contribution to the deliberations which must take place in the Central Committee (and in the whole party) -- about how we shall proceed, straighten out our movement, and win political influence and adherents among the Danish people. It is my intention at the coming Central Committee meeting (and perhaps also in writing) to go more thoroughly into various questions and also to set forth concrete proposals.

If our party is to fulfill its mission, we must critically scrutinize our previous policies, our theoretical work, and our practical forms of work. We cannot go on in the belief that since "our main line of policy is right," everything is fine, and for the rest we must put the unity of the party above everything else. The facts show that the retrogression in the party, both organizationally and in political influence, has now lasted for years and that things are bad in the internal political life and in the outward activities of the party. Organizational changes -- and changes in our working methods should help much. But we must throw everything overboard which, in that it attacks the masses, inhibits our work and prevents our theory and our policies from becoming a material force.

A new look for the party is necessary. This may be a momentarily painful and in many respects difficult process, but it must be done. It cannot be done without discussing everything thoroughly, without the differences of opinions coming out clearly and being discussed so that our movement's vital issues be made clear, not only in the Central Committee, but also in the whole party. We must discover and decide what will no longer do and what changes must be made in all areas of the party's activity.

Radical changes are necessary. If we are able to carry them through, we shall, both internally and externally, get out of the vicious circle and be able to appear as the Marxist party which the Danish working class and the Danish people need and have confidence in their struggle for the present and the future. --

Aksel Larsen, 18 July 1958.